

EXHIBIT B



Painkiller Drug Bust

Drug Busts Uncover Abuse of OxyContin

LEXINGTON, Ky., Feb. 9

A drug intended for use as a painkiller for terminal cancer patients has sent detectives in dozens of rural areas of the East scrambling to stem its illegal sale and abuse.

The United States Attorney's Office for the eastern District of Kentucky, along with the FBI and the DEA, conducted an 8-month investigation into the illegal distribution of the powerful painkiller, OxyContin. ABCNEWS and the New York Times collaborated on this story.

Operation Oxyfest There have been 59 confirmed overdoses from the drug □ in five counties in Kentucky, since Feb. 1, 2000, according to Joseph Famularo, the United States attorney for eastern Kentucky.

Famularo compared the OxyContin problem to the crack epidemic during the 1980s on GMA this morning.

"Unfortunately abusers snort it, shoot it, take it orally," said Famularo. "It has very, very profound and many times deadly consequences."

Famularo's office directed a roundup of 207 suspects this week in what officials dubbed "Operation Oxyfest 2001." It was the biggest drug-abuse raid in Kentucky history.

Those arrested ranged in age from 50 to as young as 20 years old.

"The investigation is continuing and quite frankly, I anticipate arrests later on this month and perhaps health care professionals," said Famularo.

A Wave of Abuse

Dealers of the drug □ called "oxys" on the street □ have used suffering patients, and faked symptoms to get their hands on the drug. Pharmacy break-ins, emergency room visits and arrests of doctors and other health care workers have been on the rise as a wave of people seek to illicitly obtain OxyContin.

"One of the commonwealth attorneys in the eastern part of the state related an incident where a gentleman, I use that term loosely, went in a store with a deer rifle and demanded OxyContin," said Famularo. "It was an armed robbery in daylight asking for this drug."

Addicts like the drug because they can get a powerful morphine-like high by chewing or crushing the pills, short-circuiting the drugs intended, slow time-release protection. Kentucky authorities say that some teens have been carrying pill crushers normally used by elderly patients.

After being crushed, the drug can be snorted or dissolved and injected.

Law enforcement sources cite cases of abuse in Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

In Maine, law enforcement officials say their state is among the country's largest consumers of OxyContin on a per-capita basis. The U.S. attorney there says the drug is becoming a major problem in areas of the state not normally plagued by traditional recreational drug abuse.

"What is most unusual and disturbing," says Jay P. McCloskey, U.S. District Attorney for Maine "is the number of high school kids and those in the early 20s who got addicted."

In fact, McCloskey said some of Maine's best high school students and athletes have become addicted to the drug.

Morphine-like Substance OxyContin, which came on the market five years ago, is made by Purdue Pharma in Stamford, Conn.

The drug's active ingredient is oxycodone, a morphine-like substance that is similarly found in Percodan and Tylox, which are also painkillers.

But Tylox, for example, contains five milligrams of oxycodone; OxyContin contains 40 to 160 milligrams in a time-released formula that controls pain over a longer period.

Some law enforcement officials, and Famularo, say abuse of the drug may be responsible for dozens of deaths. But Purdue Pharma strongly disputes those claims.

The company says it would like to see states tighten up prescription-writing practices with electronic data monitoring programs that track prescriptions and patients.

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